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śrīman-nārāyaṇa-caraṇau śaraṇam

Advaita Standpoint Schema: An Article on Pāramārthika, Vyāvahārika, and Plurality after Knowledge

Abstract

This article addresses a recurrent confusion in the interpretation of Advaita: the tendency to mix absolute reality, observer-side description, pedagogical concession, and the content of realization into a single undifferentiated account. The problem becomes especially acute when one asks whether the jñānī continues to perceive plurality, whether plurality remains after knowledge, or whether realization consists in seeing oneness underlying a still-appearing world. The article argues that such questions become tractable only when one distinguishes, with precision, between pāramārthika and vyāvahārika, and then further differentiates the ajñānī's experience of plurality, the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī, the pedagogical designation of the jñānī's true vision, and the pedagogical account of the jñānī's continued empirical functioning.

The central thesis is that only pāramārthika is absolutely real. All discourse involving jñānī, ajñānī, plurality, perception, continuation, and empirical interaction belongs to vyāvahārika as a domain of explanatory discourse. Within that domain, however, not all descriptions are of the same order. The article identifies three recurrent collapse-errors: observer-side description is allowed to define the jñānī's true vision; pedagogical concession is allowed to redefine the content of realization; and explanatory shorthand is elevated into a final statement of pāramārthika content. Against these conflations, the article develops a standpoint schema governed by a single interpretive rule: a designation may be vyāvahārika in label while being pāramārthika in content. On that basis, it argues that "continued plurality for the jñānī" may be admitted only in observer-side or pedagogically explanatory registers, but not as the constitutive content of the jñānī's true vision.

1. Problem Statement

Many disagreements in the interpretation of Advaita are not substantive denials of doctrine, but failures to keep track of standpoint. A sentence uttered from the side of absolute reality is read as though it were intended within empirical discourse. A pedagogical concession is taken as an ultimate description. An observer's report of the jñānī is mistaken for the jñānī's own vision. Once these layers are mixed, what should be a sharp doctrinal distinction dissolves into ambiguity.

The question of plurality after knowledge illustrates this especially well. One asks: **Does the jñānī continue to perceive plurality? Is the world still there for the jñānī? Does realization mean that plurality disappears altogether, or that plurality continues while its underlying non-dual basis is known?** These questions cannot be answered responsibly unless one first determines whose standpoint is being described, at what level the description is being made, and whether one is speaking of observer-side appearance, pedagogical concession, or the content of realization itself.

The present difficulty is not merely that several standpoints exist. It is that three specific forms of collapse repeatedly occur. First, the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī is allowed to define the jñānī's own true vision. Second, the pedagogical account of the jñānī's continued functioning is allowed to redefine the content of realization. Third, doctrinal shorthand that is useful at an explanatory level is silently elevated into a final statement of pāramārthika content. Unless these collapse-errors are explicitly separated, discussions of plurality after knowledge will continue to alternate between vagueness and apparent contradiction.

This article proposes that the issue becomes much clearer once one adopts a structured standpoint schema for reading Advaitic standpoint-sensitive language. The central claim is simple. Pāramārthika alone is absolute reality. Vyāvahārika is the full domain in which ignorance, knowledge, plurality, world, jñānī, ajñānī, and teaching are discussed. Within vyāvahārika, one must still distinguish between the ajñānī's experience of plurality, the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī, the pedagogical designation of the jñānī's true vision, and the teaching-level account of the jñānī's continued appearance and functioning.

The argument of the article therefore proceeds in three steps. It first establishes the standpoint schema itself. It then shows how the central confusion arises when distinct layers within vyāvahārika are collapsed into one another. Finally, it returns to the original question and answers it in a standpoint-controlled way. The aim is not merely classificatory neatness, but doctrinal precision: to show exactly where "continued plurality" may be admitted, where it may be pedagogically useful, and where it cannot be allowed to define the content of realization.

2. Governing Interpretive Principle

Before presenting the full schema, one rule must be stated with maximum clarity, because the entire article depends upon it.

Whenever the term "jñānī" is used, the discourse is already operating within vyāvahārika. The very notion of a jñānī, as distinct from an ajñānī, belongs to the pedagogical and empirical domain. In strict pāramārthika, there is no separate jñānī-category at all. There is only Brahman.

However, the fact that a designation belongs to vyāvahārika does not mean that the content indicated by that designation must itself be merely vyāvahārika. Advaitic teaching regularly uses pedagogical language belonging to the domains of seeker, teacher, bondage, liberation, knowledge, and realization in order to indicate what is not ultimately confined to those relations. The decisive question, therefore, is not only where a term belongs as discourse, but what it indicates in content.

The governing interpretive rule of this article may be stated as follows:

A designation may be vyāvahārika in label while being pāramārthika in content.

This rule does not create a second reality between vyāvahārika and pāramārthika. Rather, it prevents two opposite errors. Without it, one either collapses the jñānī's realization into an empirical standpoint within plurality, or else refuses pedagogical reference to the jñānī on the ground that the ultimate admits no such distinction. The first error flattens realization into experience-language; the second makes coherent Advaitic instruction nearly impossible.

Two immediate consequences follow. First, the phrase "the jñānī's true vision" cannot be read as though it named an independently standing empirical perspective parallel to that of the ajñānī. Second, the disappearance of the jñānī-category in strict pāramārthika does not invalidate pedagogical references to the jñānī within vyāvahārika. It means only that such references must be governed by the distinction between discourse-function and indicated content.

That clarification makes possible a stable treatment of the jñānī's standpoint. It is the reason the article can preserve both the intelligibility of Advaitic teaching and the non-duality of what is taught.

3. Standpoint Schema at a Glance

The full architecture may be presented first in compact form.

1. Pāramārthika

Brahman alone. No avidyā, no jīva, no jagat, no jñānī, no ajñānī, and no manifestation as a second thing whatsoever.

2. Vyāvahārika

The entire empirical and pedagogical domain in which avidyā, jīva, jagat, Īśvara, bondage, liberation, jñāna, ajñāna, jñānī, and ajñānī are discussed.

2.1 Ajñānī-side vyāvahārika dṛṣṭi

The domain of appearance and interpretation as shaped by ignorance.

2.1.1 Ajñānī-dṛṣṭi of plurality

Plurality is taken to have distinct existential status.

Nāma-rūpa is treated as independently real or significant.

Brahman is not realized as one's very Self.

2.1.2 Ajñānī-dṛṣṭi of the jñānī

The ajñānī sees the jñānī as a distinct embodied individual functioning within plurality and attributes perception, action, teaching, movement, speech, and worldly interaction to the jñānī.

2.2 Vyāvahārika treatment of the jñānī

The jñānī as discussed within the pedagogical domain.

2.2.1 Vyāvahārika designation of the jñānī's pāramārthika-dṛṣṭi

Vyāvahārika in label, pāramārthika in content.

This is the jñānī's true vision.

2.2.2 Vyāvahārika account of the jñānī's bādhita-vyavahāra

The pedagogical account of continued mithyā-appearance and functioning after knowledge.

Summary Table

Category	Standpoint / function	How plurality is treated	Relation to Brahman
(1) Pāramārthika	Absolute reality	No plurality as a second thing	Brahman alone
(2.1.1) Ajñānī-dṛṣṭi of plurality	Ignorance-shaped experience	Plurality is taken as possessing distinct existential status	Brahman is not realized as one's very Self
(2.1.2) Ajñānī-dṛṣṭi of the jñānī	Observer-side attribution	The jñānī is seen as functioning within plurality	The observer does not access the jñānī's true vision
(2.2.1) Jñānī's pāramārthika-dṛṣṭi	Vyāvahārika designation, pāramārthika in content	No plurality is retained as a second thing in the content of realization	Identical in content to pāramārthika
(2.2.2) Jñānī's bādhita-vyavahāra	Pedagogical account	Plurality may still be spoken of as appearing, but only as mithyā	Non-separate from Brahman

The remainder of the article unpacks why these distinctions are needed and how they prevent confusion.

4. How the Interpretive Confusion Arises

Before defending the schema in detail, it is useful to understand why this interpretive confusion is so natural and so recurrent. The error is not usually a crude doctrinal mistake. It is more often a layered interpretive slippage.

The ajñānī first takes plurality for granted. The world is encountered as a field of distinct entities, individual subjects, events, relations, causes, effects, and embodied persons. This initial taking of plurality as having distinct existential status is already the operative structure of ignorance. Yet that structure is so familiar that it goes unnoticed.

From within that unquestioned framework, the ajñānī then encounters the figure of the jñānī. The jñānī is seen as a person who speaks, teaches, walks, responds, remembers, eats, instructs disciples, and appears to participate in empirical life. Since the ajñānī has already granted the empirical plurality-framework, the jñānī is immediately inserted into that framework as one more, though spiritually exceptional, individual within the world.

The next step is subtle but decisive. Having already accepted plurality and having observed the jñānī within plurality, the ajñānī then attempts to imagine what the jñānī must be experiencing. At this point, the ajñānī does not usually deny the jñānī's realization. Rather, the ajñānī recasts realization in terms already available within ignorance. The result is a formulation such as the following: the jñānī too perceives plurality, but sees it correctly; the jñānī too sees the world, but knows its underlying oneness; the jñānī too experiences multiplicity, but without delusion.

Such formulations are not wholly baseless. They often arise from an attempt to preserve both empirical continuity and non-dual knowledge. But the structural problem remains. The ajñānī has projected the pre-assumed plurality-framework back onto the jñānī's realization and then merely modified it. In doing so, the ajñānī's own interpretive structure silently governs the description of the jñānī.

This is the central reason the present schema is needed. It is not enough merely to say that the jñānī's vision is different from that of the ajñānī. One must specify in what sense it is different, and one must also specify which descriptions belong to the observer, which to pedagogy, and which to the content of realization itself.

5. Pāramārthika and Vyāvahārika: The Primary Division

5.1 Pāramārthika

Pāramārthika is absolute reality. Brahman alone is. At this level, there is no avidyā, no jīva, no jagat, no jñānī, no ajñānī, and no manifestation as a second thing whatsoever. There is no plurality to be

corrected, no ignorance to be removed, and no liberated individual who stands over against bondage as its opposite. Pāramārthika is not one perspective among several perspectives. It is not a cognitive angle occupied by a particular subject. It is the non-dual reality in which no second thing is admitted.

For that reason, every formulation that speaks of "the jñānī's absolute standpoint" must be recognized as pedagogical language. Strictly speaking, pāramārthika contains no separate jñānī-category. Yet Advaitic pedagogy requires that one refer to the jñānī, and so such language is admitted within vyāvahārika while pointing beyond it.

5.2 Vyāvahārika

Vyāvahārika is the entire empirical and pedagogical domain in which avidyā, jīva, jagat, Īśvara, bondage, liberation, jñāna, ajñāna, jñānī, and ajñānī are discussed. It is the domain in which teaching operates, in which error is diagnosed, in which the seeker hears the teaching, reflects, and gains clarity. It is also the domain in which questions about world-appearance, empirical continuity, prārabdha, teaching, and the jñānī's conduct become meaningful.

The crucial point is that vyāvahārika is not a single undifferentiated layer. It contains distinct explanatory standpoints that must not be collapsed into one another. Some descriptions arise from ignorance, some from observation, some from pedagogy, and some from pedagogical designation of absolute content. The word "vyāvahārika" by itself is therefore not sufficiently precise for the present discussion.

6. Ajñānī-Side Vyāvahārika Dṛṣṭi

The first major subdivision within vyāvahārika is the ajñānī-side standpoint. This is the domain of appearance and interpretation as shaped by ignorance.

6.1 Ajñānī-dṛṣṭi of Plurality

This is the standpoint of the ajñānī within vyavahāra. Here, plurality is taken to have distinct existential status. Nāma-rūpa is treated as independently real or at least as possessing a significance not yet resolved into non-dual understanding. Brahman is not realized as one's very Self. The world is encountered as a field of distinct entities, relations, events, and individuals. Difference appears substantive, and the experiencer takes oneself to be a participant located within plurality.

This standpoint is not merely theoretical. It is existentially operative. Bondage is not simply the awareness that many things appear, but the taking of plurality as truly and distinctly there. Thus, the ajñānī's standpoint is defined not by the bare appearance of plurality, but by the existential commitment to plurality as real in its own right.

6.2 Ajñānī-dṛṣṭi of the Jñānī

A second and especially important form of ajñānī-side standpoint is the ignorant observer's view of the jñānī. The ajñānī sees the jñānī as a distinct embodied individual functioning within plurality. From this standpoint, one attributes to the jñānī perception, action, teaching, movement, speech, engagement, and worldly interaction. One says that the jñānī walks, speaks, instructs, replies, teaches disciples, and participates in the world.

This standpoint requires separate treatment because much confusion begins precisely here. The observer first takes plurality for granted and then, within that already assumed field of plurality, encounters the jñānī. From there, the observer infers that the jñānī too must in some way be perceiving plurality. The observer may attempt to refine the claim and say that the jñānī perceives plurality differently, more correctly, or as grounded in oneness. Yet the structure of the assumption remains unchanged. The observer has already accepted plurality as continuing and then fitted the jñānī into that assumed plurality.

That is why the ajñānī's view of the jñānī must be distinguished from the jñānī's own true vision. Without this distinction, the observer-side account silently becomes the description of realization itself.

7. Vyāvahārika Treatment of the Jñānī

The second major subdivision within vyāvahārika concerns the jñānī as treated within the pedagogical domain. This category remains vyāvahārika because the very notion of "jñānī" belongs only to vyavahāra. Yet within this category, two distinct senses must be carefully separated.

7.1 Vyāvahārika Designation of the Jñānī's Pāramārthika-dṛṣṭi

This is the jñānī's true vision. As a category-label, it belongs to vyavahāra because one is still speaking of "the jñānī." But the content of that vision is identical to pāramārthika. It is therefore vyāvahārika in label, but pāramārthika in content.

This is the single most important refinement in the entire schema. When one says that the jñānī knows only Brahman, abides in non-duality, or is free from plurality as a second thing, one is not describing a superior empirical viewpoint. One is not positing an enlightened version of ordinary experience. One is indicating absolute reality itself through a pedagogical designation. This standpoint is not a second reality, not a second-order perception, and not a corrected form of ignorance-based plurality. It is simply pāramārthika spoken of in relation to the notion of the jñānī.

For this reason, it must never be treated as coordinate with the observer's description of the jñānī or with the teaching-level account of empirical functioning. Those are explanatory constructions within vyavahāra. This is absolute content pointed to through pedagogical language.

7.2 Vyāvahārika Account of the Jñānī's Bādhita-vyavahāra

Distinct from the above is the teaching-level account of the jñānī's continued empirical appearance and functioning. Here, plurality may be said to continue in appearance, but only as mithyā. Nāma-rūpa is not taken as independently real. Plurality is understood as non-separate from Brahman. This is not ignorance-based plurality, but sublated plurality. The appearance does not compromise non-dual knowledge.

This category is necessary because Advaitic teaching, in its pedagogical function, admits an account of continued functioning. The jñānī is spoken of as teaching, speaking, moving, responding, and remaining available within empirical life. Yet this does not restore independent reality to plurality, nor does it imply that realization consists in retaining plurality as an ultimate object while adding the insight of oneness. Rather, pedagogy allows a description of functioning without conceding the autonomous reality of plurality.

Bādhita-vyavahāra is therefore not ordinary vyavahāra left intact after a merely internal change of attitude. Nor is it a compromise between ignorance and truth. It is a pedagogically admitted account of empirical continuity after the falsification of plurality as independently real. What continues is not an ontologically self-standing world, but an admitted appearance whose separate status has already been sublated.

For that reason, the expression "continued appearance" must be handled with care. Used loosely, it can suggest that the jñānī still confronts plurality as a genuinely standing other, while merely knowing its basis. What is safer to say is that pedagogy admits continued empirical manifestation, continued functioning, or continued transactional availability, but only within a register where the separate status of plurality has already been negated.

In this sense, 7.2 is neither reducible to ignorance nor collapsible into the absolute content of 7.1. It preserves the intelligibility of jīvanmukti discourse, empirical continuity, and observable conduct, while refusing to concede that the jñānī's realization is constituted by the perception of plurality as an enduring counterpart to Brahman.

8. Label and Content as a General Hermeneutic Principle

The distinction between label and content is not merely a local repair introduced for the present debate. It has broader hermeneutic significance. Section 2 stated the governing rule in concentrated form. The present section explains why that rule is required by Advaita's own mode of instruction.

Advaitic discourse often employs language that belongs to vyāvahārika in order to indicate what is not itself confined to vyāvahārika. Terms such as seeker, teacher, bondage, liberation, realization, attainment, and vision are all deployed within discourse, even when what is ultimately indicated is free from the relational structure presupposed by those terms. Advaitic teaching therefore proceeds from within vyāvahārika without reducing the taught content to that same order.

If this structure is missed, two opposite distortions follow. In the first, every pedagogical formulation is flattened into empirical discourse, and the indicated content is reduced to a conceptual or experiential event within plurality. In the second, one rejects pedagogical designation altogether on the ground that the ultimate admits no such distinctions, and thus makes instruction nearly impossible. The first over-empiricizes the teaching. The second over-absolutizes the silence of the ultimate.

The present article resists both extremes. It neither absolutizes the pedagogical label nor discards it. It permits discourse about "the jñānī's true vision," "liberation," or "realization" within vyāvahārika, but only on the condition that label and content be distinguished. The rule first stated in Section 2 is therefore not an escape clause. It is a disciplined reading strategy for standpoint-sensitive Advaita language.

This matters well beyond the present debate. The question of plurality after knowledge is not only a dispute about whether something appears or does not appear. It is also a dispute about how Advaitic language should be read when it moves between pedagogy and final content. Once that is seen, the label-content distinction becomes a general hermeneutic safeguard: it preserves the intelligibility of discourse without allowing discourse to dictate the ontology of realization.

In that sense, the schema developed here offers more than a clarification of one debated question. It offers a disciplined way of reading Advaitic discourse wherever pedagogical language points beyond the order to which that language itself belongs.

9. Three Clarifying Applications of the Schema

Abstract distinctions become clearer when one sees how they operate at the points where confusion most naturally arises. The following examples are therefore best read not as decorative illustrations, but as three clarifying applications of the schema under interpretive pressure. The first isolates the observational pressure created by seeing the jñānī function in the world. The second isolates the

formulaic pressure created by a seemingly adequate doctrinal summary. The third isolates the pedagogical pressure created by jīvanmukti discourse, prārabdha, and continued functioning. Read together, they show why **(2.1.2)**, **(2.2.2)**, and **(2.2.1)** must never be collapsed into one another.

9.1 Observational Pressure: The Teaching Jñānī

An ajñānī approaches a teacher recognized as a jñānī. The ajñānī observes that the teacher speaks, explains doctrine, answers questions, corrects misunderstandings, remembers prior conversations, distinguishes one student from another, uses language, responds to practical situations, and appears to move through the ordinary world without any visible breakdown of empirical functioning. From the standpoint of the observer, all of this seems straightforward. A person is seen. Speech is heard. Questions are answered. Memory appears to function. Practical distinctions appear to be recognized. The empirical scene looks intact.

From within that scene, the ajñānī naturally concludes that the jñānī must be perceiving plurality much as anyone else does, except perhaps with a deeper metaphysical insight. In other words, the ajñānī tacitly reasons: if the teacher can distinguish student A from student B, answer different questions appropriately, recall prior discussions, and respond to different persons differently, then the teacher must still be positively confronting plurality as an operative field of experience. The only difference, the observer assumes, is that the jñānī now knows that this plurality is somehow grounded in Brahman.

The present schema shows why that conclusion exceeds what observation can legitimately establish. What is directly available to the observer belongs first to **(2.1.1)**, the ajñānī's own experience of plurality as possessing distinct existential status, and then to **(2.1.2)**, the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī as an embodied participant within plurality. The observer does not, by observation alone, gain access to **(2.2.1)**, the vyāvahārika designation of the jñānī's true vision, which is pāramārthika in content. At most, the observer can motivate the need for **(2.2.2)**, the vyāvahārika teaching-account of the jñānī's bādhita-vyavahāra, that is, the admitted account of continued functioning after knowledge.

That distinction is decisive. The fact that teaching is observed does not prove that realization itself consists in confronting plurality as a still-standing second thing. It proves only that, within vyavahāra, there is observable conduct and therefore a need for a disciplined explanatory account. The observer's data may justify the admission of **(2.2.2)**, but they do not define the content of **(2.2.1)**. Put differently, the visible presence of teaching, speaking, movement, and discrimination in conduct cannot by itself convert the jñānī's true vision into a refined version of ordinary world-perception.

A further point should be noted. The ajñānī's inference here is psychologically natural because the observer begins from **(2.1.1)** long before ever reaching **(2.1.2)**. The observer already inhabits plurality as an unquestioned framework. When the jñānī is then seen within that framework, the observer almost

inevitably projects the same framework back onto the jñānī. That is precisely why this example matters. It shows how easily the observer-side standpoint silently governs the description of realization.

9.2 Formulaic Pressure: "Oneness Underlying Plurality"

A student says: "The difference between the ajñānī and the jñānī is that the ajñānī sees plurality as real, whereas the jñānī sees the same plurality but knows the underlying oneness." This statement is attractive because it appears to preserve both empirical continuity and non-dual knowledge. It does not sound crudely dualistic, nor does it sound as if it denies the empirical language used in Advaitic pedagogy when speaking of the jñānī's continued functioning. Indeed, to many readers it sounds like the most balanced summary available.

The difficulty is that the statement is not false in one simple and uniform way. Its status depends entirely on which level of the schema it is meant to express. If the sentence is used as a loose pedagogical approximation within **(2.2.2)**, it can be serviceable, provided the speaker makes clear that plurality is being admitted only in the register of bādhita-vyavahāra, that is, as mithyā, as non-separate, and as already sublated in its claim to distinct existential status. In that restricted sense, the formula may help beginners differentiate the jñānī from the ajñānī without prematurely collapsing all pedagogical language.

But if the same formula is taken as a strict statement of **(2.2.1)**, then it becomes inadequate and potentially misleading. Why? Because the sentence still grants plurality a retained positive role within the content of realization itself. It still suggests that the jñānī's true vision is structurally composed of two elements: first, an apprehended plurality; second, a correct understanding of its underlying basis. That is precisely the kind of formulation that the present article seeks to discipline. For **(2.2.1)** is not "plurality plus correct metaphysics." It is a vyāvahārika designation of what is pāramārthika in content.

The danger of the formula lies in its half-success. It improves upon **(2.1.1)** because it no longer treats plurality as independently real. Yet unless carefully restricted, it stops midway and never reaches **(2.2.1)**. It remains suspended in a conceptual middle zone where plurality is still functionally retained as something positively presented, even if doctrinally relativized. This is why the formula so often creates confusion in advanced discussion. It is close enough to the truth to appear final, while in fact belonging, at best, to the explanatory register of **(2.2.2)**.

Accordingly, the formula "oneness underlying plurality" should neither be rejected wholesale nor accepted indiscriminately. It should be located. When properly located under **(2.2.2)**, it may serve as a pedagogical bridge. When illicitly elevated into **(2.2.1)**, it obscures the asymmetry between explanatory concession and the content of realization.

9.3 Pedagogical Pressure: Jīvanmukti, Continued Functioning, and the Collapse of (2.2.2) into (2.2.1)

A student argues as follows: "If the jñānī is still spoken of as a jīvanmukta, if prārabdha is still admitted, if bodily life continues, and if teaching, speaking, movement, and worldly interaction continue, then plurality must remain real in some meaningful sense for the jñānī as well. Otherwise, jīvanmukti discourse would become unintelligible. If nothing empirical can be said to remain, what content could possibly be left to the notion of a jīvanmukta?"

This pressure is more sophisticated than the first two. Here the issue is not merely the direct observation described in **(2.1.2)**, nor merely the ambiguity of a doctrinal shorthand. The pressure arises from the pedagogical commitments of Advaitic discourse as it is commonly interpreted. The student rightly senses that Advaitic discourse itself admits an explanatory register of continued embodiment, continued transactional availability, continued teaching, and continued appearance. The student therefore reasons that if such discourse is not to be emptied of meaning, the content of realization must itself include a retained and meaningful plurality.

The force of the objection should be acknowledged. It is precisely because Advaitic discourse admits **(2.2.2)** that the objection can arise at all. If no account of continued functioning were admitted, the pressure would disappear. But Advaitic pedagogy does admit such an account, and therefore the student's concern cannot be dismissed as superficial. The question is whether the explanatory necessity of **(2.2.2)**, as admitted in Advaitic discourse, is allowed to redefine the content of **(2.2.1)**.

The schema answers in the negative. **(2.2.2)** exists precisely so that empirical continuity, jīvanmukti discourse, prārabdha-language, observable conduct, and teaching-availability may be rendered intelligible within vyavahāra. But the function of **(2.2.2)** is explanatory, not constitutive. It explains how discourse about the jñānī continues within the pedagogical domain. It does not define what realization is in its final content. If that distinction is not maintained, then every pedagogical concession made for the sake of intelligibility will gradually be converted into an ontological feature of realization itself.

That collapse can happen subtly. One begins with the legitimate claim that jīvanmukti discourse must remain meaningful. One then infers that some account of continued manifestation is required. That much is correct and belongs to **(2.2.2)**. But then comes the illicit final step: one reasons that because such manifestation must be pedagogically admitted, plurality must therefore remain positively present in the jñānī's true vision. At that point, the explanatory necessity of **(2.2.2)** has been allowed to overwrite **(2.2.1)**.

The present schema blocks exactly that move. It allows a robust and disciplined account of continued functioning. It allows that the jñānī may be spoken of as a jīvanmukta, as teaching, as moving, as

responding, and as remaining available within empirical life. It allows that such discourse is more than arbitrary observer-projection. But it denies that these pedagogical admissions determine the content of the jñānī's true vision. The existence of **(2.2.2)** secures the intelligibility of jīvanmukti discourse; it does not transform **(2.2.1)** into "plurality still retained, but now properly understood."

These three pressure-tests show why the schema is needed. In the first, observational data belonging to **(2.1.2)** threaten to define realization. In the second, a pedagogically useful formula threatens to migrate from **(2.2.2)** into **(2.2.1)**. In the third, the explanatory necessity of jīvanmukti discourse threatens to reconstitute the content of realization itself. Without the schema, empirical observation, doctrinal shorthand, pedagogical concession, and pāramārthika content are continuously overlaid upon one another.

10. Principal Objections and Replies

If the standpoint schema is to function as more than a convenient classificatory device, it must withstand the most natural objections that arise against it. The following objections are therefore substantive rather than ornamental. The first questions the need for **(2.2.1)** as a distinct discourse-category. The second challenges the article's label-content distinction. The third tests whether **(2.2.2)** weakens jīvanmukti. The fourth asks whether the article covertly implies blankness. The fifth returns to the formula "oneness underlying plurality" and asks whether the article is being overly restrictive.

Objection 1: If (2.2.1) is identical in content to (1), why not eliminate it altogether and speak only of (1)?

This objection correctly senses that **(2.2.1)** is not a second reality. If the content is identical to **(1)** Pāramārthika, then why preserve a separate heading at all? Why not simply say that the jñānī's true vision is nothing but **(1)** and leave the matter there?

The objection is powerful because it identifies a real danger. If **(2.2.1)** is treated carelessly, it may appear to introduce an unnecessary duplication: first **(1)** as absolute reality, then **(2.2.1)** as though there were some second standpoint parallel to it. The article explicitly rejects that reading. **(2.2.1)** is not a second standpoint in the sense of a second ontological layer or a second reality. Nor is it an independently standing perspective within plurality.

Yet the elimination of **(2.2.1)** would come at a real cost. The present article is not concerned only with metaphysical content. It is concerned with standpoint-sensitive discourse. Within the pedagogical domain, one must often distinguish between at least three things: the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī, the pedagogical account of the jñānī's continued functioning, and the jñānī's true vision itself. If one removed **(2.2.1)** entirely, then the schema would lose the ability to mark that third item as a distinct

discourse-function. The result would be a forced choice between speaking only of **(1)** in absolute terms or else speaking only in observer-side and explanatory terms. That would be too blunt for the actual needs of Advaita discourse.

The solution, therefore, is not to remove **(2.2.1)** but to define it with precision. It is vyāvahārika in label because one is still speaking of "the jñānī." It is pāramārthika in content because what is indicated is none other than **(1)**. In short, **(2.2.1)** exists not to multiply realities, but to preserve a necessary discourse-category within the pedagogical domain.

Objection 2: Is the distinction "vyāvahārika in label, pāramārthika in content" ad hoc or unstable?

A critic may grant that the article needs some way of speaking about the jñānī, yet still object that the distinction between label and content is overly convenient. Perhaps it merely rescues the schema from difficulty by verbal maneuver. If a category belongs to vyāvahārika, why should one be allowed to say that its content is pāramārthika? Does this not risk making the framework unstable, since any inconvenient tension could then be solved by relocating content away from label?

This objection goes to the heart of Section 8 and deserves a direct answer. The article does not introduce the label-content distinction as a local repair devised only for the present issue. Rather, it treats it as a general hermeneutic principle required by Advaitic pedagogical method. Advaita regularly uses discourse that belongs to the seeker-teacher, bondage-liberation, ignorance-knowledge framework in order to indicate what is not ultimately confined to that framework. If one denies this structure altogether, then one makes meaningful teaching nearly impossible, because all language involving realization, attainment, knowledge, instruction, or the jñānī would have to be rejected as intrinsically invalid.

On the other hand, if one fails to distinguish label from content, then every pedagogical expression is flattened into empirical discourse, and the indicated content is reduced to some conceptual or experiential episode within plurality. The present article therefore rejects both extremes. It neither absolutizes the pedagogical label nor discards it. It permits pedagogical designation while refusing to confuse the designation with the final content indicated.

In the specific case of the present schema, this means that **(2.2.1)** is not being protected by a clever escape clause. It is being located according to a broader interpretive rule: the pedagogical language of "the jñānī's true vision" belongs to vyāvahārika as discourse, while the reality thereby indicated is pāramārthika in content. The distinction is not ad hoc. It is structurally required if one is to preserve both the intelligibility of Advaitic teaching and the non-duality of what is taught.

Objection 3: If (2.2.2) is only a pedagogical account, does that not trivialize jīvanmukti and make it little more than observer-side reporting?

This objection arises naturally once **(2.2.2)** is described as explanatory rather than constitutive. A critic may say: if the jñānī's continued functioning, embodiment, prārabdha-language, teaching, and transactional availability are all placed under a pedagogical register, does that not weaken jīvanmukti drastically? Does it not reduce what appears to be a meaningful Advaitic category into something almost incidental, as though it existed only for the benefit of observers still caught in ignorance?

The objection is understandable because the language of "pedagogical account" can easily be misheard as "merely verbal" or "not really significant." The article does not intend that. The claim is not that **(2.2.2)** is arbitrary, fictitious, dispensable, or reducible to raw ajñānī-error. Nor is the claim that continued functioning is simply imagined by outsiders without any legitimate place in Advaitic discourse.

Rather, the point is that **(2.2.2)** serves a specific and indispensable explanatory role. It accounts for the admitted continuity of teaching, conduct, embodiment, prārabdha-language, and transactional availability without granting plurality independent reality. It secures the intelligibility of jīvanmukti discourse within vyavahāra. What it does not do is define the final content of realization. To call **(2.2.2)** pedagogical is therefore not to diminish it, but to assign it its proper order. It is more than mere observer-side reporting, yet less than the constitutive content of **(2.2.1)**.

The distinction matters because without **(2.2.2)**, the discourse of jīvanmukti becomes difficult to articulate; but if **(2.2.2)** is allowed to overwrite **(2.2.1)**, then explanatory necessity is converted into ontological content. The article therefore neither trivializes jīvanmukti nor allows it to redefine realization.

Objection 4: Does this framework imply that the jñānī has no empirical awareness whatsoever, and therefore collapse realization into a blank or contentless state?

A reader may object that if plurality is denied any retained role in **(2.2.1)**, then the article seems to leave nothing positively intelligible in realization except an abstract negation. It may then appear that the article is driven toward a picture of the jñānī as inhabiting either a sensory void, an inert blankness, or an incommunicable absence in which nothing empirical can any longer be said to arise.

This objection must be answered carefully because the article is indeed denying something. It is denying that the content of realization should be defined as the retained perception of plurality as a still-standing second thing. But from that denial it does not follow that the article is positing an empirical blank, a dissociative nullity, or a suspended state of inert consciousness.

The schema itself already prevents that misreading. Where empirical continuity, functioning, teaching, responsiveness, or transactional presence are being discussed, the relevant category is **(2.2.2)**. The article explicitly preserves that register. What it refuses is the further step by which such empirical continuity is made constitutive of **(2.2.1)**. In other words, the article rejects both the crude reification of plurality and the equally crude caricature of realization as blankness.

The real point is subtler. The content of **(2.2.1)** is not to be positively modeled on an empirical scene at all, whether that scene is one of multiplicity or one of experiential emptiness. Once the debate is framed as though one must choose between "plurality still retained" and "nothing whatsoever left," the discussion has already been forced into an inadequate empirical mold. The article's framework resists that forced choice.

Objection 5: Is the formula "the jñānī sees oneness underlying plurality" really so problematic? Does the article over-discipline a useful Advaitic expression?

A final objection may concede much of the article's architecture and yet resist its treatment of the familiar formula discussed earlier. One may argue that phrases such as "the jñānī sees oneness underlying plurality" have long served an important pedagogical function, and that the article risks creating unnecessary suspicion around an expression that is both intuitive and spiritually useful.

The article readily grants the pedagogical value of such language. Indeed, this is precisely why the formula is dangerous only when mislocated, not when used with standpoint control. As an approximation placed under **(2.2.2)**, the expression can help move a student beyond **(2.1.1)** by weakening the assumption that plurality is independently real. In that setting, it may serve as an effective bridge.

But the article insists that a bridge must not be mistaken for the destination. The problem is not the sentence itself, but the tendency to let it drift upward into **(2.2.1)** and then function as though it were a final statement of realization. Once that happens, plurality retains a structurally constitutive role within the content of the jñānī's true vision, and the asymmetry between explanatory concession and pāramārthika content is lost.

So the article does not ban the formula. It disciplines it. It permits the expression where it belongs, namely in the explanatory register of **(2.2.2)**, but refuses to let it define **(2.2.1)**. The restriction is therefore not excessive. It is precisely the measure needed to preserve both pedagogical usefulness and doctrinal clarity.

11. The Central Conflation

The core error that this schema seeks to prevent is not a single vague confusion, but a patterned conflation of categories that do not belong to the same order. Once these categories are mixed, the language of appearance, pedagogy, and realization begins to slide into one another.

The first collapse occurs when **(2.1.2)** is conflated with **(2.2.1)**. The ajñānī sees the jñānī acting within plurality, teaching, speaking, distinguishing persons, and responding to events. From this, the ajñānī concludes that the jñānī must also be positively confronting plurality in the content of realization. What belongs to the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī is thus taken as though it disclosed the content of the jñānī's realization.

The second collapse occurs when **(2.2.2)** is conflated with **(2.2.1)**. Advaitic discourse admits a pedagogical account of the jñānī's continued functioning, continued transactional availability, and continued empirical appearance. But if that explanatory account is allowed to define realization itself, then the pedagogical necessity of bādhita-vyavahāra is transformed into constitutive content.

The third collapse occurs when a formula that may be serviceable within **(2.2.2)** is illicitly elevated into **(2.2.1)**. Expressions such as "the jñānī sees oneness underlying plurality" can be pedagogically useful so long as they remain within the explanatory register. But once they are allowed to function as final statements of realization, plurality retains a structurally constitutive role within the jñānī's true vision.

These three collapses are related, but not identical. The first is primarily observational. The second is primarily pedagogical. The third is primarily formulaic. Their common structure, however, is the same: something that belongs within vyāvahārika as observation, concession, or explanatory language is allowed to determine what should instead be governed by the distinction between label and content.

The schema therefore protects a necessary asymmetry. Some statements belong to **(2.1.2)** and report how the jñānī appears to the ajñānī. Some belong to **(2.2.2)** and preserve the pedagogical intelligibility of continued functioning. Some belong to **(2.2.1)** and indicate, under a vyāvahārika designation, what is pāramārthika in content. If these are not kept apart, the language of teaching ceases merely to accompany realization and begins to overwrite its content.

This is why the article insists on disciplined standpoint-management rather than on a merely general appeal to "different perspectives." The issue is solved only when one can say exactly which statement belongs where, and exactly what error occurs when it is moved elsewhere.

12. Answering the Question of Plurality after Knowledge

The structured answer to the question may now be stated with greater precision.

If the question concerns the **content of the jñānī's true vision**, then the relevant category is **(2.2.1)**. Here plurality is not retained as a second thing. The content indicated is identical to **(1)** Pāramārthika. Accordingly, realization is not to be defined as "plurality still perceived, but now correctly understood." That formulation exceeds what may be admitted at this level.

If the question concerns the **pedagogical account of the jñānī's continued empirical functioning**, then the relevant category is **(2.2.2)**. Here plurality may be said to continue in appearance, but only as mithyā, only as pedagogically admitted, and only within the register of bādhita-vyavahāra. This is the level at which one may speak of continued teaching, continued conduct, continued transactional availability, and continued manifestation without conceding plurality independent or constitutive status.

If the question concerns **what the ajñānī observes**, then the relevant category is **(2.1.2)**. The ajñānī certainly sees the jñānī as functioning within plurality and naturally attributes worldly perception, activity, and response to that jñānī. But what belongs to **(2.1.2)** cannot by itself determine the content of **(2.2.1)**.

The formal answer may therefore be stated as follows. The "continued perception of plurality for the jñānī" may be admitted only in one of two ways: either as the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī in **(2.1.2)**, or as the pedagogically disciplined account of continued functioning in **(2.2.2)**. It may not be admitted as the constitutive content of the jñānī's true vision in **(2.2.1)**.

This distinction also clarifies why many apparently opposed answers are in fact answers to different questions. One person denies plurality after knowledge and is speaking of **(2.2.1)**. Another admits continued functioning and is speaking of **(2.2.2)**. A third points to the visible conduct of the jñānī and is speaking of **(2.1.2)**. Contradiction appears only when these answers are detached from the standpoints that govern them.

The issue, then, is not whether one must choose once and for all between "absolute non-appearance" and "continued appearance with oneness." The issue is which level of discourse is being invoked. In the content of realization, the governing reference is **(2.2.1)** and therefore **(1)**. In pedagogical explanation, the governing reference is **(2.2.2)**. In observer-side description, the governing reference is **(2.1.2)**. Once that is seen, the question of plurality after knowledge ceases to generate interpretive confusion.

13. Conclusion

The argument of this article may now be restated in its simplest form. Only pāramārthika is absolutely real. Everything involving jñānī, ajñānī, plurality, perception, continued appearance, empirical functioning, and explanatory classification belongs to vyāvahārika as a domain of discourse. Yet not all

vyāvahārika descriptions are of the same order. Some belong to the ajñānī's experience of plurality, some to the ajñānī's observation of the jñānī, some to the pedagogical account of continued functioning, and some to the pedagogical designation of what is pāramārthika in content.

The article's central contribution is therefore twofold. First, it offers a standpoint schema that prevents distinct layers within vyāvahārika from being collapsed into one another. Second, it grounds that schema in a governing interpretive rule: a designation may be vyāvahārika in label while being pāramārthika in content. Without that rule, one either reduces realization to an empirical perspective or renders pedagogical discourse about realization unintelligible.

On that basis, the question of plurality after knowledge can be answered without interpretive confusion. If the issue concerns the content of the jñānī's true vision, the relevant reference is **(2.2.1)** and therefore **(1)**. If the issue concerns the pedagogical account of continued empirical functioning, the relevant reference is **(2.2.2)**. If the issue concerns what the ajñānī observes, the relevant reference is **(2.1.2)**. Apparent contradiction arises only when these are detached from the standpoints that govern them.

The final claim is therefore precise. The jñānī's actual vision is not "plurality correctly understood." That belongs, at most, to an explanatory register within vyāvahāra. The jñānī's true vision, in content, is none other than pāramārthika. Continued plurality may be admitted as observer-side attribution or as pedagogically disciplined bādhita-vyavahāra, but not as the constitutive content of realization itself.

Concise Thesis Statement

- **(1)** Pāramārthika: Brahman alone.
- **(2.1.1)**: Ajñānī's experience of plurality as possessing distinct existential status.
- **(2.1.2)**: Ajñānī's observation of the jñānī as an embodied participant within plurality.
- **(2.2.1)**: Vyāvahārika designation of the jñānī's true vision, pāramārthika in content.
- **(2.2.2)**: Vyāvahārika teaching-account of the jñānī's bādhita-vyavahāra.

Only **(1)** is absolutely real. All distinctions belong to **(2)**. **(2.1.1)** is the current ignorant view. **(2.2.1)** indicates the realized standpoint.

The central interpretive error lies in conflating **(2.1.2)** or **(2.2.2)** with **(2.2.1)**. Accordingly, "continued plurality for the jñānī" may be admitted only in the observer-side register of **(2.1.2)** and/or in the explanatory register of **(2.2.2)**, but not as the content of **(2.2.1)**, which points only to pāramārthika.

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